

Self-Care

Tips for Heart Health



Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, but there's a lot you can do to prevent it. Taking time to care for your heart can be challenging as you go about daily life. But it's easier than you think to show your heart the love it deserves each day. Small acts of self-care, like taking walks, getting quality sleep, and cooking healthy meals, help your heart. Research shows that self-care can help you keep your blood pressure in a healthy range and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.



What does "self-care" mean?

Researchers define self-care as what you do to stay healthy. It's also what you do to care for any health problems you have, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or mental health disorders. It's [heart-healthy living](#).

What parts of your self-care routine help your heart?

Self-care for your heart is really self-care for your whole self. You can improve and protect your health overall when you:

- ✓ Get a daily dose of [physical activity](#), such as a brisk, 30-minute walk.
- ✓ Cook meals that are low in sodium and unhealthy fats.
- ✓ Take your medications as prescribed and keep your medical appointments.
- ✓ Sleep 7-8 hours a night.
- ✓ Manage stress through, for example, meditation, yoga, a warm bath, or quiet time with a good book or funny movie.
- ✓ Try to reach or stay at a healthy weight by moving more and having snacks like fruits and veggies ready to grab when hunger hits.

How can you make self-care for your heart easier?

The trick is to plan ahead. Build heart-healthy activities into your daily self-care routine. Schedule things that are both good for you and important to you. You might want to set aside time to:

- ✓ Cook delicious, heart-healthy recipes. Choose some from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's delicious heart-healthy eating [website](#).
- ✓ Go for a bike ride, take an online exercise class, or have a family dance party.
- ✓ Make that doctor's appointment you've been putting off. Many providers now offer telehealth appointments to make accessing care easier.
- ✓ Organize your medications.

What's your health status?

Part of self-care is knowing your health status. Even during uncertain and busy times, get your blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels checked. Talk to your health care provider about your heart health.





ABCS of Heart Health

To reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke



Every year, Americans suffer more than **1.5 million heart attacks and strokes**. But following the ABCS can help reduce your risk and improve your heart health.

- A:** Take **aspirin** as directed by your health care professional.
- B:** Control your **blood pressure**.
- C:** Manage your **cholesterol**.
- S:** Don't **smoke**.

A Take aspirin as directed by your health care professional.

Ask your health care professional if aspirin can reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Be sure to tell your health care professional if you have a family history of heart disease or stroke, and mention your own medical history.

B Control your blood pressure.

Blood pressure measures the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. If your blood pressure stays high for a long time, you may suffer from high blood pressure (also called hypertension). High blood pressure increases your risk for heart attack or stroke more than any other risk factor. Find out what your blood pressure numbers are, and ask your health care professional what those numbers mean for your health. If you have high blood pressure, work with your health care professional to lower it.

C Manage your cholesterol.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance produced by the liver and found in certain foods. Your body needs cholesterol, but when you have too much, it can build up in your arteries and cause heart disease. There are different types of cholesterol: One type is "good" and can protect you from heart disease, but another type is "bad" and can increase your risk. Talk to your health care professional about cholesterol and how to lower your bad cholesterol if it's too high.

S Don't smoke.

Smoking raises your blood pressure, which increases your risk for heart attack and stroke. If you smoke, quit. Talk with your health care professional about ways to help you stick with your decision. It's never too late to quit smoking. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW today.

Million Hearts® is a national initiative to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. It is led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, two agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Million Hearts® word and logo marks and associated trade dress are owned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Use of these marks does not imply endorsement by HHS.

Heart disease and stroke are the first and fourth leading causes of death in the United States. Together, these diseases cause 1 in 3 deaths.

The good news is that you can reduce your risk by following the ABCS!